

Citizens Advice Bromley Overview (November 2023- May 2024)

Overview Focus:

Living Standards

This update has been created to bring **awareness** to Research and Campaigns work both locally at **Citizens Advice Bromley** and nationally.

It outlines emerging issues, case studies, **success** stories and **events**, as well as data and current policy **efforts** across various **advice** topics.

To find out what's going on at Citizens Advice Bromley, please follow us on X.

@CAB_Bromley

Local News

Emerging Issues:

Housing



Clients have been informing both our assessors and caseworkers, that few local rents come within the 'affordable' range. Specifically, if they are on benefits, this challenge of affordability means coming within the Local Housing Allowance for the property size they are needing.

This is especially problematic when they tell us how limited available social housing is and the wait for property's. One result of this is that both the local authority and the individuals themselves then have to look towards the private rented sector for accommodation.

Combine this with DSS discrimination in the private sector, which we covered in the last newsletter, makes it difficult to sometimes prevent homelessness in eviction cases and is at the heart of the Renters Reform bill which would have significant implications.

Local News

Successes from the Service:

Welfare Benefits



A client living in a women's refuge due to domestic violence sought assistance from Citizens Advice Bromley after being refused Personal Independence Payment (PIP). She also needed guidance on the impact of moving to permanent accommodation on her benefits.

"Awarded her Standard Rate PIP for daily living and mobility for 3 years [...] significantly improving her situation."

Citizens Advice Bromley appealed the PIP decision on her behalf, informed her about the Universal Credit (UC) change of circumstances form, and helped her apply for Council Tax Single Person Discount, Council Tax Support, the Welfare Support Fund, and a Homeless Starter Pack.

As a result, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) awarded her Standard Rate PIP for daily living and mobility for 3 years, totalling £9,880 (including £4,300 backdated). She also received the UC Housing Element (£7260 annually), Council Tax Single Person Discount (£337.69 annually), Council Tax Support (£709.16 annually), and a home starter pack worth £75, significantly improving her situation.

Local News

Research and Campaigns:

Events

Young Mums Hub:

In February 2024 we were able to attend St. Edwards Church Hall to speak to young mums. Herbie was able to share the full range of services provided by [Citizens Advice Bromley](#) and Bromley Well and take questions from the group and individuals.

Many questions were asked about private housing disrepair, social housing availability within Bromley and what benefits were available to parents working part time jobs. We were then able to follow up with families afterwards and connect them with the answers and support needed.



Local News

Research and
Campaigns:

Events 



Councilor Visit to Anerley Town Hall Outreach:

In April 2024 Jessica Arnold (Clock House Ward) came to visit Graham (Supervisor) and the team. Herbie discussed common trends such as negative budgets, where individuals struggle to afford necessities even after covering their basic expenses, and the increasing number of clients reaching out to us via email.

One conversation with our advisor Louise focused on how demand for services had changed over years, except housing. She discussed private landlords and rising rents pushing people to move out as well as damp and mould and the lack of housing within Bromley for social housing clients. At the end of the meeting both the team and Jessica agreed to [work closer together](#) to [support](#) clients where they can.

Local Constituency data: November 2023 – May 2024

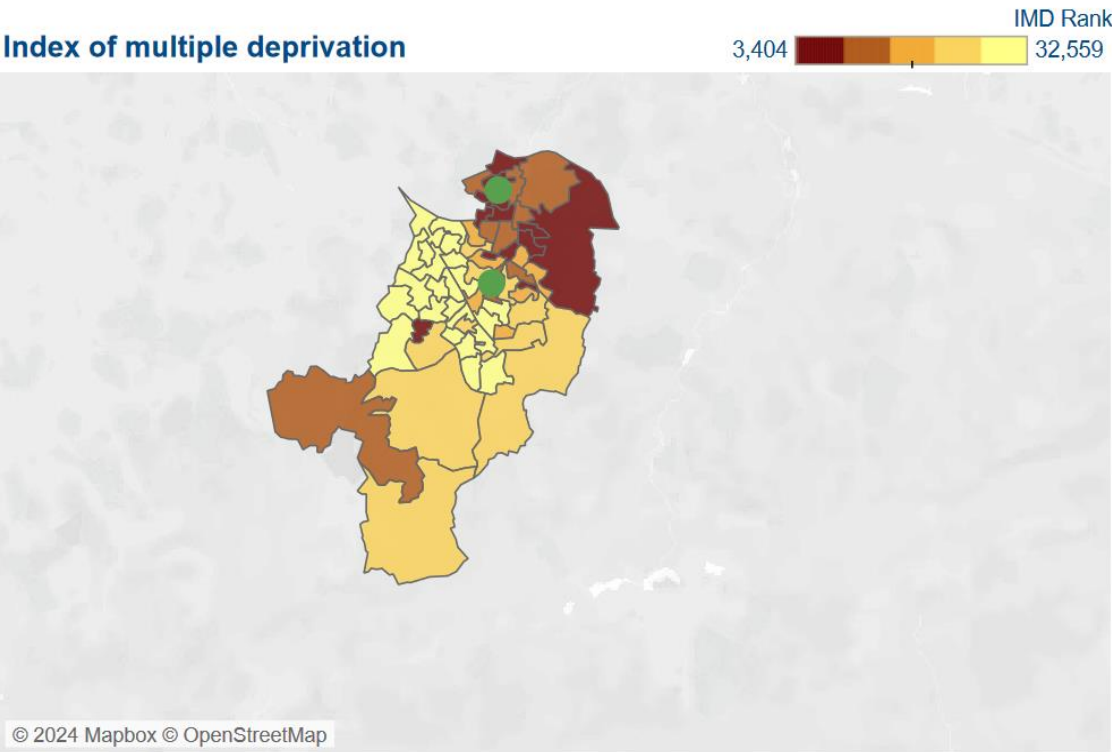
Constituency

Dashboard:

Orpington

The national team have been busy recently and have now created a dashboard for each constituency.

In the map below showing the IMD we can see the darker areas demonstrating the higher areas of deprivation, with our Walnuts and Cotmandene Library (shown in green on map), Oak Community Church and Mottingham Big Local project exactly where the need is. During this period we saw 821 clients from this area covering 5,869 issues!



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Constituency Dashboard:

Orpington

We can see how those issues break down. Benefits scores are high specifically Personal Independence Payment Claims and Charitable Support including foodbank being really high (this links to us being able to provide these services within this area). Of Debt issues Council Tax arrears are the most prevalent, followed by Fuel Debt. A cumulative total of 57 clients were struggling with both threatened and actual homelessness.

In this constituency we helped

Clients	821
Issues all	5,869

Top Issues

Benefits & tax credits	1,233
Benefits Universal Credit	886
Charitable Support & Food Banks	865
Debt	755
Utilities & communications	540

Top 5 benefit issues

21 Personal independence payment	362
01 Initial claim	260
22 Localised social welfare	178
04 Limited capability for work elements	175
28 General Benefit Entitlement	170

Top 5 debt issues

09 Council tax arrears	148
04 Fuel debts	109
07 Rent arrears - housing associations	59
99 Other Debt	55
13 Credit, store & charge card debts	48

Homelessness

02 Actual homelessness	34
03 Threatened homelessness	23

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Constituency Dashboard:

Orpington

During this period, data indicates clients are predominantly white females aged 35 to 64 and 68% were either disabled or had long-term health issues. Within Bromley as a whole, one might have expected these disabilities to lead to a higher demand for disability benefit advice and claims. However, since 2019, Universal Credit, rather than Disability Benefits, is the most claimed benefit. London boroughs, including neighbouring ones, in contrast have gradually shifted their main benefit claims from Universal Credit to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), reflecting a national trend.

Gender



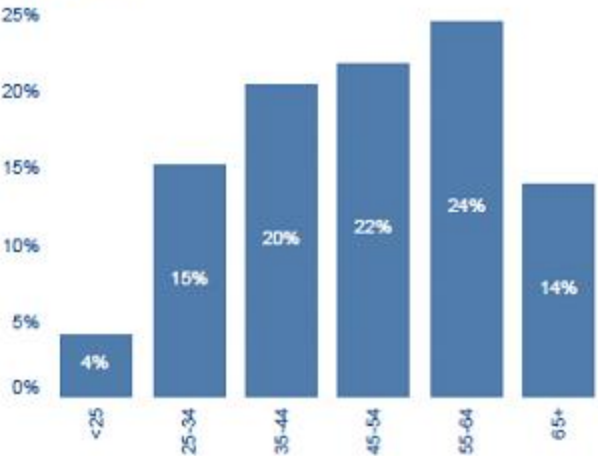
Ethnicity



Disabled or Long term health



Age group



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Constituency

Dashboard:

Orpington



In April 2020, Citizens Advice assisted 10,011 clients with PIP applications and issues. This number has increased significantly, with 28,984 clients seeking help in April 2024 across our 1,600 locations. In response to this trend, as part of Bromley Well, we support clients with benefit applications and appeals. In partnership with Age UK, Mind, and Mencap, we deliver support for long-term health conditions, physical difficulties, and anxiety, among other issues.

National News

Consumer Awareness



Smart Meters and Energy:

National Citizens Advice reports that millions are missing out on smart meter benefits due to faults and poor supplier service, [BBC Radio 4 Today programme](#), 23/05/2024

Despite an election being called, they report a strong sweep of media coverage for their latest energy report on smart meters, including on the 8am BBC Radio 4 bulletins, just before the Prime Minister was interviewed (listen back [here](#) from 2:09:02). We picked up coverage across broadsheet and tabloid print media, including [The Guardian](#), The Daily Mail, and The Sun, as well as national and local BBC Breakfast and radio bulletins.

Our Statistics:

[Daily Express](#), 20/05/2024. To kick off our latest Consumer Awareness campaign, our [tips on buying a used car press release](#) was covered by The Express, and our stat on having received 43,000 used car complaints in 2023 was used in the Sun Online.



Citizens Advice Bromley

Contact us:

**Lastly, if you would like to contact
Citizens Advice Bromley to arrange a
visit or simply talk please email at:**

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**To find out what's going on at Citizens
Advice Bromley, please follow us on X.**

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